

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2143

FOR NEA/ARN DRAPER FROM TEAM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: LE MORG

SUBJ: TEAM PROGRESS REPORT - FINAL UNIT VISITS

1. LAST TWO DAYS ABSORBED WITH IN-DEPTH VISITS TO UNITS AT ABLAH (INCLUDING NUCLEUS OF SOUTHERN FRONT), HENRI CHEHAB CASERNE (BEIRUT MILITARY REGION) AND FAYYADIYAH BARRACKS (MT LEBANON MILITARY REGION). TEAM HAS COMPLETED PROBES OF ALL MILITARY REGIONS EXCEPT SOUTH, BUT HAS, AS INDICATED, TAKEN LOOK AT FORCE THAT WILL EVENTUALLY MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION.

2. TEAM MORE THAN EVER STRUCK BY CONGLOMERATION OF EQUIPMENT HELD BY LAF. INVENTORY WE HAVE PHYSICALLY SEEN COVERS FORTY YEAR'S SPAN AND COMES FROM AT LEAST FIVE COUNTRIES. ONLY AREA WHERE ANY UNIFORMITY EXISTS IS IN COMMUNICATIONS FIELD WHEREIN CONSCIOUS DECISION MADE EARLY TO LIMIT ACQUISITION TO U.S. SOURCE ONLY. RESULT, HOWEVER HAS BEEN THAT LAF, AGAINST ANY RATIONAL OBJECTIVE STANDARD, WOULD BE UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE. ON OTHER HAND, SUPER-FLUITY (TERM USED ADVISEDLY) OF ORDANCE AND TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT REQUIRES INORDINATE AMOUNT OF MAINTENANCE JUST TO STAY AHEAD OF POWER CURVE. WE HAVE SEEN CONSCIENTIOUS EFFORTS EVERYWHERE OVER
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LAST SEVERAL DAYS TO PERFORM BAILING WIRE MAINTENANCE. GREAT INGENUITY EXHIBITED IN REBUILDING DIVERSITY OF EQUIPMENT PHOENIX-LIKE, LITERALLY FROM DETRITUS OF WHAT LAF EUPHEMISTICALLY BUT PERSISTENTLY REFERS TO AS QUOTE THE EVENTS UNQUOTE. JUNK PILES, HOWEVER, RAPIDLY BEING REDUCED TO SKELETAL REMAINS RENDERING MAINTENANCE PROGRAM BEYOND HELP IN EMERGENCY.

3. ABLAH VISIT ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE AT UNIT TRAINING AREA AT SOUTH END OF RAYAK AIR BASE. AFTER HEDGINGALL WEEK, LAF ADMITTED NO STOMACH FOR OUR VISITING ABLAH CASERNE WHICH IT SHARES WITH SYRIAN CONTINGENT. THOUGH IT OBVIOUSLY CAREFULLY CANNED, INFANTRY, FIELD ARTILLERY, ACK-ACK AND COMBAT ENGINEER CAPABILITIES DEMONSTRATED, THOUGH ALL PRETTY RUDIMENTARY, CONSIDERABLE ENTHUSIASM, DISCIPLINE AND BASIC KNOWLEDGE DEMONSTRATED. WE LOOKED CLOSELY AT SOVIET-SOURCE 122MM GUN/HOWITZERS. EIGHT OF TOTAL LAF INVENTORY OF 12 ARE EARMARKED TO GO SOUTH. GUNS ARE IN BEST SHAPE OF ANY ORDNANCE WE HAVE SEEN. ALL FA BATTALION OFFICERS WE SPOKE WITH ARE FT SILL TRAINED AND SOMEWHAT DISPARAGING OF ASPECTS OF 122 EXCEPT RANGE. AS WITH OTHER SOVIET GUNS, 122 HAS RESPECTABLE DIRECT-FIRE CAPABILITY. WE POINTEDLY ASKED ABOUT USE (DURING THE EVENTS) OR TRAINING IN THIS MODE OF EMPLOYMENT, SINCE DURING LAF ARTY CDR'S VISIT TO CONUS SEVERAL MONTHS AGO IT STRONGLY AVERRED THAT LAF NEEDED SP 155 BECAUSE OF ITS SUBSTANTIAL ANCILLARY DIRECT FIRE CAPABILITY. RESPONSE FROM LAF GUNNERS WAS VIRTUALLY TOTAL NEGATIVE CONCERNING BOTH PRIOR USE AND TRAINING IN DIRECT FIRE. UNIT HAS BARELY ENOUGH TRANSPORT FOR FIELD PIECES (AS OPPOSED TO 155 UNIT AT SARBA WHICH HAS NONE). AMMO SITUATION, AS INDICATED EARLIER, LIMITED TO 400 122MM ROUNDS IN TOTAL LAF INVENTORY. TEN OF 18 RECENTLY RECEIVED JORDANIAN SALADIN ARMORED CARS DEMONSTRATED AT RAYAK. UNIT CDR STATED THAT OTHER EIGHT WERE SERVICEABLE, BUT DEMONSTRATION OF OBVIOUSLY HAND-PICKED TEN CALLED THIS INTO QUESTION. ONE OF TEN LOST TOTAL IGNITION SYSTEM, SECOND SOUNDED QUESTIONABLE AFTER START-UP. OTHER EIGHT PERFORMED BETTER

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THAN WE HAD PERHAPS EXPECTED. SMALL ACK-ACK PLATOON ARMED WITH AGED OERLIKON TRIPLE 20MM SHOWED COMMENDABLE VERVE PUTTING GUN INTO ACTION. CDR TOLD US, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD VIRTUALLY NO AMMO FOR THE WEAPON.

5. ALL-MUSLIM UNIT AT HENRI CHEHAB CLEARLY INDICATED BOTH CONSIDERABLE PRIDE AND INGENUITY BUT RESENTMENT OVER REAL OR IMAGINED TREATMENT AS LOCAL STEP-CHILD. UNIT MECHANICS PERFORMING FAR ABOVE ECHELON ACTUALLY REBUILDING VEHICLES IN UNDER-EQUIPPED SHOPS. PARENTHETICALLY, IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT DESPITE REPEATED REFERENCES TO QUOTE CENTRAL WORKSHOPS UNQUOTE AND REPEATED REQUESTS TO VISIT THEM, WE HAVE YET TO SEE ONE. AS IN TRIPOLI AND AT FAYYADIYAH, UNIT AT HENRI CHEHAB EXPENDING CONSIDERABLE TROOP LABOR EFFORT AND TIME JUST TO MAKE FACILITIES HABITABLE AFTER DESTRUCTION AND LOOTING OF CIVIL WAR.

6. FAYYADIYAH PRETTY MUCH CHRISTIAN CARBON COPY OF HENRI CHEHAB. TROOPS, TO INCLUDE NEW RECRUITS IN QUOTE PRE-BASIC UNQUOTE TRAINING PHASE (DESIGNED TO MIX CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM ENLISTEES IN GROUP EFFORT) WORKING HARD TO REPAIR DAMAGE INCURRED IN 8 FEBRUARY ET. SEQ. EVENTS. THOUGH MANY NEW SCARS STILL EVIDENT, CLEARLY, MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. SHOULD EMPHASIZE THAT TEAM DOES

NOT REPEAT NOT SUBSCRIBE TO APOCALYPTIC DESCRIPTION OF SITUATION
AT FAYYADIYAH RENDERED IN EMBASSY REPORT SENT DEPARTMENT BEFORE
8 FEBRUARY EXPLOSION.

7. FOOTNOTE CONCERNING TEAM TRAVEL PLANS. FIRMLY BOOKED TO
RETURN WASHINGTON ON PAN AM FLT #67 ARRIVING DULLES ON FRIDAY,
21 APRIL AT 1600. STUTTGART LEG REPORTED TO USCINCEUR BY
SEPTTEL.
PARKER

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